

Saving Saints Rescue UK
Annual General Meeting on 11 August 2023
Minutes

Present: Rachel Wesley (RW) – Chair/Secretary
Simon Grundy (SG) – Treasurer
Amanda Rees (AR)
Tracey Turnbull (TT)
Helen McGuirl (HMcG)

1. Agenda

- Apologies
- Update on actions from AGM held on 11 August 2022
- Resignations and election of Trustees
- Financial return
- Summary of activities over the last 12 months
- Feedback from users of the service over the last 12 months
- Priorities and challenges for the coming year including review of charity name
- ADCH audit process feedback and outcome
- Training needs

RW welcomed everyone to the 8th formal AGM of the group.

2. Apologies

Helen McGuirl (HMcG). All trustees expressed disappointment that HMcG was unable to attend the meeting.

3. Update on actions from AGM held on 11 August 2022

Actions from the previous AGM have been completed apart from training, merchandise/online shop development and the appointment of a President. Ideas to approach a President were explored and will be taken forward at the strategy meeting ie Tom Hanks, Bradley Wiggins, other celebrities who had St Bernards.

4. Changes to Trustees as per Constitution

Amanda Rees had joined us as a trustee in May 2023 and she was formally welcomed to her first AGM.

Trustees are now as follows for the next 2 years as per the Constitution:

Chair/Secretary – Rachel Wesley

Treasurer – Simon Grundy

Rescue/Adoption/Fundraising Co-ordinators – Rachel Wesley, Tracey Turnbull

Merchandising/Online shop/Fundraising – Amanda Rees

General advisory/behavioural – Helen McGuirl

Media – Amanda Rees

5. Financial update

The Treasurer had provided each member with a copy of the Annual Statement of Accounts from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. This showed a slight increase in reserves to £10,073 from last year. Most of the expenditure for 2022 to 2023 continued to be transport, kennelling (partnership with Marsh Lea kennels) and vet costs. Direct adoptions have dropped significantly as part of our strategy to reduce our activity to a more sustainable level in view of the financial challenges from 147 in 2022 to 63. However, transport and vet costs have substantially risen. The daily cost of kennels had remained static however the length of time that dogs were remaining in kennels before finding a suitable adoption has increased by x3 times increasing our monthly kennel costs substantially.

SG expressed his opinion that the increase in interest rates may rise again to around 6% so it was vital that we contained costs.

An application to HMRC for last year's gift aid was made earlier in 2023 and this amount was reflected in the current balance.

The Treasurer confirmed that he was satisfied with the level of financial controls in place and no breaches of policies had been identified.

6. Summary of activities over the last 12 months

RW provided data relating to the following measurable activities in the last 12 months:

Adoptions – 63 (plus 11 RBU for other charities)

Dogs in long term foster – 7 (Simba, Chessie, Bailey, Rollo, Sissi, Shadow, Millie)

Dogs in kennels – 7 (Lennox, Lenny, Rikki, Otto, George, Luna, Annie)

Euthanasia – 3 (due to severe aggression). RW proposed a new euthanasia policy and this was ratified by all trustees and will be added into the charity's handbook.

Behavioural update – In HMcG's absence, RW provided an update on behavioural guidance and our new relationship with Briony Lazardies, canine behaviourist. Briony has given comprehensive feedback to 3 members of the general public on non-saints, 5 on dogs adopted from us, and 2 dogs in our foster care since she began working with us 3 months ago.

Failed adoptions – 10. A review undertaken highlighted that lack of adopter understanding of the needs of large breeds was a factor in most adoptions failing. Briony Lazardies has offered to have a pre-adoption discussion with all adopters in addition to the documentation/advice we already provide.

The number of active fosters is currently 5 with no fosters available for emergencies. Recruitment advertising for new fosters is ongoing. The challenge is finding experienced fosters of large breed dogs who do not have children under 16 or who are able to safely separate existing pets.

Home checks conducted (including for other rescuers) – over 96, 3 failed (for SS). The majority of homechecks have been conducted online over the last year.

Fundraising and raising awareness days – 6 – Helvellyn walk, local fundraisers, Peterborough dog show, 4 car boots, monthly dog walks in Chorley; 100 Club continues to operate

Media presence – Cumberland Building Society, BBC Cambridge, Peterborough Herald, Radio 2, Dogs Today

Pat/companion dog sessions (in last 12 months) – 5 sessions conducted – RW and Dotty are attending Bolton Hospice now every month

Ebay activity – remained low with a profit of £39. This will remain open until our website shop becomes fully operational. Most popular items continued to be dog bibs and personalised cards.

Website shop – remains closed

7. Media strategy

Media activity – an increased presence and use of Twitter and Instagram was now in place and analytics showed our following our Facebook had increased by more than a third in the last year along with Instagram.

Website – AS has taken this forward with an IT specialist, Rhys Welsh who is providing services currently on an ad hoc voluntary basis. Basic changes have now been made on the site and all dogs in need of foster/adoption are now updated on a regular basis. AS requested SG as treasurer to consider what investment the charity could make in a review of our website.

We have also been trialling the TikTok platform and AS/Grace Williams are creating content to generate more interest in dogs available for adoption.

8. Merchandising

Old stock continues to be sold including gym bags, t-shirts, bibs, slobber cloths, dog toys and other donated items online and at events. AS is continuing to source eco/ethical items for an online dog product shop. This online shop development will be linked into the review of the website.

9. Feedback from users of the service in the last 12 months

Positive feedback has been received from many adopters in the last year and also from our rescue partners. A number of positive comments have been received about our back up support and 5 adopters have chosen to adopt another dog with us.

We have received one formal complaint in the year and this has been satisfactorily resolved.

10. Training needs 2023

RW had passed Trustees information about free resources and training available with the Charity Commission on responsibilities and ADCH. TT and AR are due to attend the intensive dog behaviour programme with Battersea in November 2023 as part of our successful grant application last year.

RW continues to progress with Canine Diploma level 4. AS is finalising which canine behaviour programme she will enrol in.

11. Future strategy, income generation ideas and priorities for the forthcoming year

A weekend strategy meeting is scheduled for 2/3 September 2023 of all trustees. The agenda for this meeting is – review of current resources (people, financial, physical); review of media strategy – use of website/social media

platforms; how the charity can streamline operations further; focus and priorities for the coming year, income generation and fundraising ideas.

SG has approved a £500 investment of our website and AS is approaching potential IT specialists to explore how this can be best utilised including a review of our analytics.

A strategy review meeting is scheduled for 2/3 September. Due to the high increase in surrender activity within the UK within the St Bernard breed particularly, it was agreed that this would remain our focus of activity for the next 6 months. All trustees also expressed their commitment to support other large, working guardian breeds and RW confirmed this was in line with our constitution. It was agreed that non-UK rescue work would be highly restricted to dogs who we had previously committed to unless adopters wished to privately sponsor a foreign dog in which case we would provide our advice and guidance.

A review of our 'trading' names on Facebook Saving Saints/St Bernard and Big Paws UK was undertaken to reduce any confusion about us operating on 2 different sites. It was decided that our charity name will change to Saving Saints and Big Paws Rescue UK which represents our focus on both St Bernards and other larger breeds. **HMcG confirmed her agreement on 3/9/2023 to this.**

RW will arrange for everyone involved in the assessment, training, advice and behavioural support of our dogs to meet at the kennels before the end of the year. A review of all documentation and guidance will be undertaken by this working party with RW's admin help. A review of the foster training packages and modules from MARS/Pedigree and those utilised by other ADCH members will also be undertaken to look at how we can improve our foster training package.

12. ADCH audit and feedback

RW shared the ADCH feedback from our audit of our processes and kennels. ADCH's assessor noted a number of positives about our handbook, policies and procedures. However feedback regarding certain aspects related to the kennels housekeeping and kennel sizes was noted. It was agreed that this would be discussed with the kennels with a variety of options being considered by the Trustees. The ADCH audit had also raised a concern about how to ensure our larger dogs were provided with adequate enrichment in the kennel environment and how this was evidenced. The kennels had already created a document to evidence this. A review of our behavioural assessment processes was already underway in light of Briony joining the team to reinforce our force-free approaches.

13. Non-UK dog issues

TT is due to appear on a programme for the veterinary profession on the risk of Brucellosis to the human population. This will be shared on our website and TT has been asked to write a new section in our handbook to outline in detail the charity's position on zoonotic diseases and testing and TT is part of a cross charities working party on these issues.

14. Date of next AGM

Agreed for August 2024 – date TBC.

Saving Saints Rescue UK
Charity Register no 1171050

Accounts for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Profit and loss account

Receipts and donations	22651
(Grant from Battersea 12/22	10000)
Expenses	(21594)
Balance b/forward	9016
Total	10073

Balance sheet

Co-Op bank balance	4609
PayPal balance	5414
Stock in hand	50

Total **10073**